

# 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



## **PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS PHARMACISTS**

The Public Health Service is one of the oldest service agencies of the United States. For much of the history of the PHS, pharmacists, also known as stewards, were trained through apprenticeships. It was not until 1897 that graduation from a pharmacy program became a requirement for appointment. Prior to 1918, pharmacy services in PHS hospitals were provided through contract services or by Federal civilian employees. In 1918, a reserve corps composed of pharmacists, dentists and engineers were commissioned to serve with physicians in the PHS. While the authority existed to commission pharmacists in the reserve corps, it was not until 1930 that pharmacists were actually commissioned. In 1930, the Parker Act allowed pharmacists to be appointed into the regular corps of the PHS Commissioned Corps, with promotion available up to the grade of Assistant Pharmacist, corresponding to that of a Navy Lieutenant. The first two PHS pharmacist commissions occurred on July 23, 1930 and eight pharmacists were commissioned on September 5, 1930. In 2005, with over 900 Commissioned Corps pharmacists, we are proud to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Pharmacy Category. The American Pharmacists Association and the Pharmacist Professional Advisory Committee are pleased to commemorate this important milestone with the presentation of this commemorative coin. We challenge you to carry it as you carry on your important mission as a Pharmacist Officer in the PHS Commissioned Corps!

Two PHS pharmacists have served as President of the  
American Pharmacists Association (APhA),  
CAPT George F. Archambault and CAPT Lisa L. Tonrey.

# The History of the



## CHALLENGE COIN

During World War I, American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy scions attending college, and others came from farms and factory jobs. In one squadron, one wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze, inscribed with the squadron emblem, for every one of his fellow squadron members. He carried his medallion in a small leather sack around his neck.

Shortly after acquiring his medallion, the pilot's aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire during a combat mission. He was forced to land behind enemy lines and was immediately captured by the Germans. In order to discourage his escape, the Germans took all of his personal identification, overlooking the small leather pouch around his neck. He was later moved to a small French town near the front and escaped captivity during a heavy bombardment.

The pilot succeeded in avoiding German patrols and made his way through the front lines to a French outpost. Unfortunately, the French had been plagued by saboteurs and did not recognize the young pilot's American accent. Thinking him to be a saboteur they prepared to execute him until they noticed the medallion in the leather pouch around his neck. The captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion and delayed his execution long enough to confirm his identity. Instead of shooting him, they gave him a bottle of wine!

Back at his squadron, it became a tradition to ensure that each soldier carried his medallion at all times. This was accomplished through a unique challenge. A challenger would ask to see the coin, and if those challenged could not produce it, they were required to purchase a drink of choice for their challenger. If the challenged soldier did produce the coin, then his challenger was required to pay for the drink. The tradition continued throughout the war, and for many subsequent years. APhA and the Pharmacist Professional Advisory Committee continue the tradition and are pleased to provide you with this unique *challenge coin*!